186, 728, 648, 668

Syria	MD1
Israel	MF1
Jordan	MG1
Iraq	MH1
Lebanon	ME1

/For an account of the formation and growth of the Arab Succession States after World War I, the Arab Nationalist Movement, relations between the Arab countries and the great Powers, see 66: Bonné, M1 Middle East, category 116, pp. 77-87./

14

177 Syria has not been merely a passive receptacle for influences
● 186 coming in from outside. Whether or not the hypothesis of an
194 indigenous population and culture be accepted, it is certain that the geographical structure of the country, and the nature of its inhabitants as modified by that structure, have determined the forms which the incoming streams of influence have taken. For example, the sharp geographical divisions of Syria have helped to perpetuate the differences between various elements in the population, which have come into the country from different directions or from the same direction at different times: racial and tribal divisions have given rise to an intense localism of feeling, which has linked itself in various ways with the prejudices, the hostilities and the exclusiveness generated by the great political and religious conflicts of the past. Localism and particularism have deeply affected the political life of the country. Sometimes, when Syria has formed part of a larger political unit with a strong Government, they have been held in check ; but when the unit has disintegrated, or the Government has grown weak, the country has been partitioned between a number of petty and ephemeral local dynasties, more often than not at variance with one another.

Local and communal feeling is closely linked with the persistence of tradition. Throughout almost the whole of history the Syrians have been subjected to a succession of foreign conquerors. They have been forced at least partially to accept the customs and cultures of their rulers, and in the process they have acquired two arts : the art of rapid and superficial assimilation, and that of preserving, beneath new modes of behaviour and in new forms, their old beliefs and ways of living. ' Bow down to every nation which passes over you, but remember me in your hearts ', said one of the founders of the Druze sect. It is a lesson which not only the Druzes have learned.

177 But the role of the Syrian population has not merely been one of assimilating, or resisting, outside influences. It has transformed these influences and spread them to the surrounding world, and it has made its own and original contributions to civilization. From the time of the Phœnicians, Syrian merchants have been scattered throughout western Asia and the Mediterranean world. Syrian officials helped to administer the Roman, the Arab and the Ottoman Empires.

41

II. THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

I

THE opening of the First World War in 1914 found a number of Governments and groups with an interest in changing the political status of Syria. First, there were the Arab nationalists, who wanted the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire to become autonomous. They were divided in their political ideas and preferences. Some wished to achieve their aims through the help of Great Britain or France or the United States; others relied only upon their own strength and efforts. Some aimed at establishing an independent Arab State, others a self-governing Arab kingdom within an Ottoman federation, yet others a Syrian State loosely linked with the other Arabic-speaking regions. But all alike were hostile to the Young Turkish Government with its Pan-Turanian policy, and very many were willing, with greater or smaller hesitations and reservations, to throw in their lot with Great Britain should Turkey become involved in the war.

Arab nationalist sentiment was widespread among the army officers, officials, professional men and in general the educated classes. The nationalist societies in Syria like 'al-Fatat' were in touch with Arab nationalists in the other Arabic-speaking regions: with the Iraqi army officers of 'al-Ahd'; with the powerful Syrian colonies in Egypt and the New World; with the Sharif Husain, the ruler, under Turkish suzerainty, of the Moslem Holy Places in the Hejaz; and with Abdul-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the most powerful ruler of central Arabia, and virtually an independent monarch in spite of a shadowy Turkish suzerainty.

Side by side with Arab nationalism there existed a lively particularist movement among the Lebanese Christians. They wished the autonomy of Lebanon to be completed and its frontiers extended; they looked to France for help in achieving their aims and for protection when these should have been realized. Certain of them were not hostile to Arab nationalism, provided it recognized the special position of Lebanon; some indeed worked actively for Syrian or Arab independence.

Of external powers, France was the most interested in Syria. She possessed important interests in the country: investments, Christian missions and schools and a traditional connexion

11: Hourani 5-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria M DI

abandoning their own religious codes. Law was personal. Not simply was there no concept of equality before the law; there was no idea of sameness.

For these reasons, throughout the period of Arab and Ottoman rule the Christians and Jews were allowed a certain autonomy. Each sect formed a community, or as it was called in Arabic a 'millah' and in Turkish a 'millet', within the State and co-terminous with it. In matters affecting the community, the Government treated with it as a whole through its heads, and not with the members of it individually. Certain civil functions were devolved upon the spiritual heads and representative bodies of the communities. They were allowed to administer the property and institutions of their communities and to decide matters of personal status—marriage, divorce, inheritance and so on—in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

This system originated long before the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. It developed gradually and was only formalized in the nineteenth century by a series of Imperial edicts. Throughout the period of Moslem ascendancy it succeeded in preserving self-respect and a sense of community among the religious minorities, although it may also have helped to perpetuate bitterness and suspicion between them.

The heterodox sects which clung to the fringes of Islam were in a more ambiguous position. Officially they were regarded as parts of the general body of Islam; but in fact the cleavage between them and the orthodox was almost as great as that between Moslems and Christians, and they like the Christians were usually left to direct their internal affairs in accordance with customary law and the precepts of their religions.

5

Since for Moslems and Christians alike consciousness of belonging to a religious community was the basis of political and social obligation, both were very conscious of not belonging to other communities; and the sense of distinctiveness led easily to suspicion and dislike. This was true also of every Christian sect in its relations with the others, for each sect formed a separate 'millet'; and of the orthodox Moslems in their relations with the heterodox. Difference of sect was

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no less important an element in the common consciousness than difference of religion.

It may be, indeed, that the religious doctrines to which the communities adhered were not in all cases the fundamental cause of their distinctiveness; that when these doctrines were first preached certain elements in the population already felt themselves in various ways and for various reasons different from the peoples among whom they lived and by whom they were dominated; and that they adopted the new doctrines as an expression of their distinctiveness. Whatever its origin, a sect once founded tended to become a closed community very conscious of its difference from the surrounding world: a difference which revealed itself not only in religious beliefs but also in customs and traditions. The sect persisted as a social entity even after the impulse of affirmation which gave it birth had died away. To leave one's sect was to leave one's whole world, and to live without loyalties, the protection of a community, the consciousness of solidarity and the comfort of normality.

6

Islam gave the traditional society of Syria its dominant creed, its explicit moral code and its political organization. Its language and literature and its images of heroism and human grandeur came from the Arabian desert.

The way of life of the Bedouin has deeply influenced Islam and been as deeply influenced by it, but the two are distinct. It is a way of life which has developed in order to meet the needs of the nomadic existence, an existence of the utmost bareness, insecurity, homelessness and poverty. It has alone made that existence tolerable and given it dignity and even a certain splendour. For it the cardinal virtues are courage and the other martial qualities; hospitality without limit or thought of recompense; loyalty to one's family and tribe; and reverence for the transmitted wisdom of the community, embodied in tribal customs and traditions and in a code of honour. The life of the Bedouin has no room for subtleties and doubts, and would be wholly barren of culture were it not for the Arab love of language, of story and of poetry.

The Arabian desert produced not only a moral system, but also a social organization. It was based upon the clan and

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the tribe or collection of clans, held together by blood-relationship and regulated by customary law dispensed by chieftains who owed their position to a combination of birth and ability.

Arab life and society were reflected in the literature of the Arabic tongue: a literature which at least in its early phases grew up in isolation, developing its own norms and methods. Later it was influenced by other literatures, but throughout its history it preserved a continuity of outlook and subject-matter and perfectly expressed the dreams, the convictions and the limitations of the people which produced it.

7

The Arabian influences were brought into Syria by the successive waves of Beduin immigrants from Arabia; a few generations after the Islamic conquest they had permeated virtually the whole population, whether or not they were Arabian by origin. The popular morality, the folk-lore and the language of the people became Arabic, and the literate took pride in Arabic poetry and prose. Tribalism and loyalty to the clan or patriarchal family continued to be the bases of society even in conditions very different from those which had generated them. The depth of Arabization varies however from one part of the country to another. In certain sections of the coastal mountain-ranges Arab ways took longer to penetrate and perhaps went less deep than in the plains of the interior.

The only important elements in the population which were not Arabized were the Kurdish and Turcoman tribes which at a later period had established themselves in the northern portions of the country, and some of which from being nomads had become semi-sedentary or sedentary. They however were not wholly isolated from the majority, since they were orthodox Moslems and possessed a tribal organization similar to that of the Arabs. There were also Armenians, Turks and Europeans in the larger towns.

8

The Arab tradition was modified by the new economic conditions which the tribes found when they reached the Fertile Crescent. Those tribes which remained on the edge of the Crescent continued their pastoral life; but those which

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threatened by the avarice of his superiors, the encroachment of his equals and the insubordination of his vassals. The size of domains and the fortunes of noble families were always changing. A certain stability was, however, given to the system by the practice of turning lands into religious trusts (Waqfs) for religious or charitable objects. Families which were the custodians of such trusts, which benefited from them in other ways, or which by tradition filled important religious positions, had a better chance of retaining their wealth and influence than those which had become rich and powerful through tax-farming.

At the bottom of the feudal structure were the cultivators, who were serfs of their immediate lords, owing them a variety of feudal dues and oppressed by them. The usual practice was for a village to hold and cultivate its land in common; small individual holdings were the exception.

9

Sometimes the local dynasts were adventurers, ruling by the sword alone and without any support from local tradition. But often their rule was firmly based upon local sentiment and loyalty: a localism which was reinforced by tribalism and, in those districts in which compact religious minorities were settled, by sectarianism. This was especially so in Lebanon; but over the whole country it is true to say that the local community was the real political and social unit. There was no effective consciousness of an Arab nation, and 'Syria' was no more than a geographical expression; nor was there any sense of responsibility for the Government, which was generally regarded as essentially hostile, an instrument of oppression.

Side by side with the life of the countryside, there went on the distinctive life of the Syrian towns. The immemorial stopping-places on the trade-routes—the ports, the bazaar-towns and the caravan-towns—kept something of their greatness in the Ottoman period. There was still a lively transit-trade; Syrian wheat and fruit still went to Egypt, cottons and silks to Europe. The town-populations were Arabic in language, and their ways were deeply influenced by Arab customs; but their social structure differed from that of the countryside, and was determined by their peculiar economic function. They were naturally more open to influences

IV. THE WESTERNIZATION OF IDEAS

I

THE coming of the West aroused a new process of thought not only in Syria but in all the Arabic-speaking countries; this process originated earliest and has developed furthest in Cairo and Beirut, but exists in some form in the other centres of Arab life, and is a single process which does not admit of sharp regional divisions. Much of this chapter will therefore concern itself with the general movement of thought in Arabic. Moreover, it will be necessary for the sake of exposition to formulate theoretical standpoints more clearly, articulately and abstractly, and in sharper opposition to one another, than they are formulated by contemporary Arabic writers.

The civilization of the West revealed itself in many lights to the Arabs. It came to them asserting, in act if not in word, its own superiority and its contempt for the East; thus it aroused a sense of humiliation, the more bitter because the Arabs had for so long regarded themselves as the source of true religion and civilization. It came to them as a Christian civilization, and thus it compelled them to take a new view of Christianity and of its relationship with Islam. Again, although it was Christian, it was also secular, denying the theocratic idea of life and politics; thus it stimulated thought about the place of religion in society. It preached and practised a new view of human relationships; it was based upon an undreamed-of mechanical power and an unknown economic organization; it was prosperous and unimaginably strong. In these aspects it was to be feared as a force of oppression and destruction; but also perhaps to be imitated, since it held out hopes of an equal prosperity and strength. Above all, it appeared as a revolutionary force, threatening or promising radical change for worse or for better.

Some Arabs, among them many of the religious leaders, averted their gaze from the possibilities of the new world, and regarded it simply as a hostile force to be resisted; except in the remote places of the Arabian peninsula, this school of thought has now practically died out. There were and still are others who are so intoxicated with the splendour of the West that they are prepared to give up not only their own traditions but even their faith in a special destiny for the Arabs and Islam, and to become fully and uncritically

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria M91

Westernized as soon as possible. But the greater number of thoughtful Arabs have since the beginning of the Western penetration refused to go to either extreme. They realize that there is much that is good in Western civilization; that their own civilization is ill; and that its maladies would make it desirable, even did not its weakness make it inevitable, that it should be influenced and transformed by the West. But at the same time they can see clearly the faults in the West and the qualities of their own tradition; more fundamentally, they have faith that the Arab and Islamic peoples have creative gifts of their own and in consequence a special part to play in human history. Therefore their reaction to the impact of the West has been neither uncritical rejection nor uncritical acceptance, but a process of questioning which still continues: What can the Arabs become? What can they do in the world? What form and degree of Westernization will best serve to revive their creative spirit?

The paragraphs which follow will summarize some of the answers which different groups of Arabic thinkers give to these questions. It must however be made clear in advance that the explicit views of particular thinkers are only one among several factors which will determine the answer which the Arabs give to these questions. Men brought up in the Arabic language and the Moslem faith, and in unceasing contact with the West in their thoughts and their lives, are forced by the nature of their situation to make judgements and decisions about the acceptance or rejection of Western ideas and ways; these judgements and decisions are influenced or even determined by the Arab and Moslem standards of those who make them; and having been made they involve others which perhaps had not been foreseen. Thus by a process of unformulated and unsystematic thought the structure of society gradually changes. A thinker of genius may alter the direction of that process; but in the absence of genius, the explicit doctrines of the intellectual élite may have only a very limited effect.

2

The first task of the Arab thinkers was to understand the West. It was effectively begun in the days of Muhammad Ali in Egypt, has continued ever since and is still far from completion. Its methods are various: schools on the Western

11: Hourani 3-4 (no date) 1948 MD1 Syria MD1

fundamental principles. But it is important also for other reasons. Greek thought lies at the root of that Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages of which the significance has already been mentioned: it is therefore part of the intellectual heritage of the Islamic East as well as of the West; it may serve as that common ground of agreement and understanding which is necessary if a fruitful intellectual contact is to be re-established between the Moslem and the Christian worlds.

5

The Syrian people will have a special part to play in the intellectual reconstruction of Islam, because of certain characteristics which they possess. They are peculiarly aware of the 'tension' between East and West, and between Islam and Christianity. This is partly because their minds are exceptionally subtle, flexible and sensitive; but partly also because Syria has always been exposed to influences coming in from Mediterranean lands, and tends to be affected by them sooner and more profoundly than the other Arab countries. Through the mission-schools, through emigration and in other ways there has been built up in Syria an educated class Westernized in spirit as well as in externals, but still Arabic in language and for the most part in sympathies and feeling. Thus the conflict between East and West has become a conflict inside their own souls; as such it raises problems which pose themselves with peculiar urgency.

The factors which make the problems more profoundly felt and more urgent in Syria than elsewhere make them also more likely to find a solution there. It is educated Syrians who are best fitted to see the tension between East and West on the level not of politics or polemics but of doctrine. But if they are to contribute effectively to the revival of the Arab and Islamic mind, they must develop an intellectual life of their own, and not be content to become culturally a province of Egypt.

6

There is one factor which gives Syria a unique position in the Arab world. It possesses a large Christian population, whose intellectual life and Christian consciousness have been reviving in recent years. The impact of the West upon them has been as great as upon the Moslems, although of course it has taken a

different form: the West has meant for them not only the discovery of a new way of life but, in the most fundamental things, a rediscovery of their true selves. The result has been an interesting and important revival of Christian culture, expressing itself through Arabic and through French. It began as a revival of literature and language, and as such was a part, and a very important part, of the general Arabic literary renaissance; but gradually it is becoming conscious of the deepest spiritual question which faces it, the question of what it is to be an Arab Christian.

This movement of Christian life and thought is important first of all for its own sake, but also for the part it may play in the re-awakening of Islam. The Syrian Christians are, as Christians, particularly fitted to understand the culture of Europe; while as Arabs, speaking the Arabic language and conversant with its literature, they can interpret Europe to the Arab Moslems and, what is more important still, can confront them inescapably with the challenge of Christianity. They do not feel the conflict between the West and the Islamic East in exactly the same form as that in which Moslems feel it. But they feel it in another form, and in one which raises problems of which the solution is both particularly necessary and particularly difficult. For them the problem poses itself as one of political loyalties, and therefore their material well-being and perhaps even their physical safety depend upon their solving it. In the conflict between the European Powers and the forces of nationalism, on which side should they range themselves? Religious affinities, long-standing ties of friendship, gratitude for favours received and fear of Moslem domination draw them to the side of Europe; but ties of language and culture, common feelings of humiliation and pride, and the desire to put an end to the religious dissensions of the past attract them to the nationalist camp. Divided loyalties of this sort are tragic, but they are also a necessary stage in the development of thought, alike for the individual and for whole peoples; it is in the struggle to reunite the divided personality that the intellect becomes mature. The Christians stand to the Syrian people roughly as the latter as a whole to the Arab people: it is in them that the tension which is felt vaguely and in some degree by all goes deepest and may reach its crisis earliest. But if the crisis is to be fruitful, they must try at one and the same time

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to remember that they are Christians, and revive their specific Eastern Christian thought and life, and to remember that they are part of Arab Asia and have a special mission to perform in the East. The attempt has already begun. Among the Catholics and Greek Orthodox of Beirut there are already small groups of thinkers who are trying to understand the nature of Christianity and of their special duty as members of the Eastern Churches; there are other groups which are struggling with the question of the national existence and loyalty of the Arab Christians. There are very few, however, who are trying to hold together in a balance the two aspects of their being, as Christians and as Arabs. The attempt is difficult, some would say impossible; but on its success depends much more than their own fate.

7

The other movement, that of secularization, springs from the belief of many Arab thinkers that the superior strength and stability of Western society is due to the limitations which have been imposed upon the action and influence of religion. (This belief illustrates one of the main characteristics of Arab thought to-day: the conviction that the West has a 'secret', which, if only the Arabs could find it, would confer on them success similar to that of the Western nations.) In Western thought, each 'field' is autonomous in the choice of its principles and methods; and the Western community is a secular community, in which religion is tolerated, but no longer gives the regulative principles for every kind of human activity. Western thought is no longer theocentric, Western society no longer theocratic. In the same way the Arabs, these thinkers argue, should no longer attempt to regulate their society by Islamic doctrine and law; they should curb the pretensions of the religious leaders, and having done so should reorganize each aspect of their community in the light of those principles which Western experience shows to be appropriate to it. Secularism has taken many shapes. It has been one of the factors in the growth of the nationalist movement.[1] It is also giving rise to a movement of philosophical, ethical and social thought.

In the sphere of philosophical thought, this movement has so far made little headway. Books have been written upon

[1] See Chapter VI.

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VI. ARAB NATIONALISM

I

000 OUT of the changes which have been discussed in the last three chapters, and the problems to which they have given rise, has grown the nationalist movement. Since this movement has for the most part taken an Arab rather than a specific Syrian or Lebanese form, it is necessary at the beginning to ask whether and in what sense the Syrians and Lebanese are Arabs.

143 Racially the Syrians and Lebanese are not of exactly the same stock as the Arabs of the Peninsula. The latter are mainly of the 'Mediterranean' race, with some exceptions. In the Syrian desert and parts of the interior of Syria, the inhabitants are also mainly Mediterranean; but in the mountains the Mediterranean has been united with an 'Alpine' element, to produce a 'Dinaric' or 'Armenoid' type. In most of the interior the population is a mixture of these two types, with the Mediterranean predominating.

182 Racial origin, however, is not of much influence upon
143 popular judgement. When Syrians and Lebanese say that they belong to the Arab people, they mean that they possess the Arab heritage of language, history, literature and customs, and that they are conscious and proud of possessing it. The only exceptions to this are the Kurds, Turcomans, Circassians, Armenians and Assyrians, who together constitute only a small percentage of the population.[1]

143 It would perhaps be more correct to regard the Arab people, of which the inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon form a part, as a group of peoples, which resemble one another in certain important respects but are dissimilar in others. The inhabitants of geographical Syria may be considered as constituting a single member of this group. They differ from the people of the Arabian Peninsula in that, while the latter are almost purely Arabic or 'Semitic' in their ways of life and thought, in the Syrians the Arab has been mixed with other influences. They differ on the other hand from the peoples of Iraq, of Egypt and of the other North African countries in that while these too have been partly moulded by other than Arab influences, the latter have not been identical with the influences upon Syrian and Lebanese life.

[1] See Chapter VII.

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In Iraq such influences have been largely Persian and central Asian; in Egypt there was an indigenous civilization which was not entirely submerged by the Arabian influences; in much of the rest of North Africa there is a Berber race which has resisted all attempts to assimilate it. To these differences must be added those which spring from the mere fact of living in different regions possessing varying economic possibilities and subjected at times to very diverse historical processes.

It is possible to observe differences not only between the members of the Arab group of peoples, but also within each people. Physically and culturally alike, various elements within the people of geographical Syria represent varying blends of Arabic, of Aramaic and other Semitic, and of non-Semitic influences. Many such differences which formerly existed have in the course of time been levelled out and forgotten, but some of them still linger on, especially in mountain districts. For example, there are a few villages north of Damascus in which Aramaic is still spoken side by side with Arabic. What is more important, the Maronites and other Christians in northern and central Lebanon have not on the whole the same consciousness of being Arabs as the other inhabitants of the country. This is true also to a great extent of the Arabic-speaking Syrian Orthodox and Catholics and of the Alawis in the district of Latakia.

Thus the answer to the question which was posed above is a complex one. The Syrians and Lebanese are members of the Arab group of peoples; but they differ in some important ways from other members of that group; and they also differ among themselves in certain ways.

2

Although the Syrians and Lebanese have been Arabs in this sense for many centuries, it is only in the last two generations that an explicit nationalist movement has grown up.

Nationalism exists wherever two factors, which are to be found in some form in every society, take a particular shape and have a particular relation to one another. The one is the consciousness of solidarity: the sense that there is between the members of a certain group a special closeness of feeling, a special similarity of reaction, a possibility of understanding based upon the possession of common characteristics—language, customs, memories, real or imagined ancestry.

186 The other is the will to work together for the attainment of a common aim in which all believe and for which all are willing to sacrifice something or everything. When this will derives its content from the consciousness of solidarity, and the members of the group take as their common aim the preservation both of that consciousness and of the characteristics on which it is based, nationalism arises. Political nationalism comes into existence when the attempt is made to achieve the common aim by means of the establishment of a State, which includes all the members of the group and of which the Government is imbued with the nationalist ideal.

000 In Europe, the idea of nationalism became an important political force during the nineteenth century. In one aspect it was a development of the idea that 'the people' can and should be master of its own destiny: that the ordinary citizens of a State have both the right, and if effectively organized, the power to set up and to pull down Governments; and that Governments are only entitled to demand the obedience of the community which they rule if and in so far as they emanate from the will of that community. In another aspect it was the child of Romanticism, which was, among other things, the attempt to discover in Time and History what for the Christian belongs only to eternity: an adequate object of sacrifice and worship, a supreme purpose and consummation of human life. One type of Romanticism found what it sought in the community and the life devoted to the service of the community; and it was especially attracted to that type of community which is based on common memories and a common history.

3

186 Among the Arabs, nationalism in the sense defined above
648 did not emerge until the later part of the nineteenth century. The sense of solidarity and pride in the Arab tradition had long existed; but they did not form the basis of a coherent movement until the West began to impinge upon the Arab world. Its impact had two effects, both of which worked together to produce the Arab movement. On the one hand, the West brought new dangers to the Arabo-Islamic life. On the other hand, far from destroying the Arabs' faith in their having a special part to play in history, it gave them fresh vitality and the promise of new strength. Arab nationalism

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may be defined as the resurgence of the will to live of the Arab people, produced by the action of the West upon it, and with the object of combating the dangers and realizing the benefits of that action.

It is true that the explicit aim of the nationalist movement in its first phase was not to come to terms with the West but to shake off the rule of the Ottoman Turks. But it was not simply a movement of revolt against an oppressor. The Ottoman rule was resented so much more bitterly than in the past, not because it was so much worse, but because it prevented the attainment of that new life of which the Arabs were becoming aware, and made it impossible for them to take what they believed to be their rightful place in the world. The overthrow of the Turkish régime, in the conception at least of the more thoughtful of them, would only be the beginning of their national effort. It would create the conditions in which it would become possible to face the real problems of their community.

What those problems were has already been made clear in Chapters III and IV. Most fundamental of all was the danger of the complete destruction of the principles of loyalty upon which the traditional community had rested: membership of the family, the tribe and the religious community, respect for the past, the habit of obedience to the suzerain. Should they go and nothing take their place, the community might dissolve into a rabble of individuals without loyalties or the consciousness of belonging to a group. It was to avoid this danger that the nationalists endeavoured to arouse a consciousness of the common heritage of language, historical memories and customs shared by the Arabs; and to make that consciousness the basis of political action and ultimately of government.

A more immediate, although less fundamental, problem was raised by the penetration of Western goods and economic processes. This was beneficial in so far as it held out hopes of raising the standard of living of the people; but it dislocated the traditional structure of commerce and industry, and it threatened to place the economic life of the Arabs in the power of Western trading and concessionary companies. A similar process of dislocation was taking place in other aspects of social life. Here again much that was bad in the old order was being swept away, but also what was valuable

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Abbasids. Thus they were vividly aware that there had been a time when the Arabs had been conscious of themselves as a special community, and as a community had played a leading part in history. The thought of the solitary moment of history when the Arabs had been united in a single Empire, in which they had been the dominant element, overshadowed in their minds the memory of ages before and since. The revival of interest in Arabic literature in the course of the nineteenth century had a similar effect: coming to them through the medium of their own language, it aroused their pride and the sense of their own possibilities in a way which would have been impossible for the Greek culture of Syria or the pre-Islamic culture of Iraq. Then again the vision of a united Arab nation seemed to offer to a people becoming conscious of their weakness, and of the internal divisions which were the partial cause of it, a strength such as a Syrian or an Iraqi nation could never possess.

5

In the light of this analysis, it is possible to summarize the assumptions and aims of the movement.

The basic assumptions of Arab nationalism are: first, that there is or can be created an Arab nation, formed of all who share the Arabic language and cultural heritage; secondly, that this Arab nation ought to form a single independent political unit, both in the interests of the nation itself and in those of the world; and thirdly, that the creation of such a political unit presupposes the development among the members of the Arab nation of a consciousness, not simply that they are members of it, but that their being members is the factor which should determine their political decisions and loyalties.

The ultimate aim of Arab nationalism is to preserve and enrich the Arab heritage: to enable the Arabs to live in the modern world on an equal footing with other peoples, and to contribute to its civilization without being forced to break with their past. The political objectives of the nationalist movement are the independence of all the Arab lands; the establishment of some degree of unity between them; the encouragement of national consciousness; and the reorganization of the social and economic structure of the nation by means of a process of controlled and discriminate Westernization.

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The movement of which these are the assumptions and aims is still at a comparatively early stage of development; and its ideals, although they have found their expression in patriotic rhetoric and poetry, have not yet achieved a reasoned and systematic exposition. But although Arab nationalism is still largely inarticulate and unformed, it does not spring only from passion and prejudice, nor is it confined only to the educated few who are its spokesmen. It is a movement with rational grounds and purposes, which, although they have not yet become fully explicit, exist implicitly and as motive forces alike in the mind of the peasant, who feels nothing but a vague unrest; of the educated townsman, in whom unrest has crystallized into definite emotions, desires and grievances; and of the politician, who expresses the emotions, desires and grievances in speeches and programmes. Although they might not be able to define and defend nationalism, they are all in some degree Arab nationalists.

Like all immature movements, Arab nationalism has not yet found its own authentic voice. It tends to imitate Western nationalism in its programme and its terminology. It is of great importance to make it clear that the spirit of the movement has not yet been definitely or adequately expressed. Its present form is not the only form which it could take. It is possible that if nationalism fails to obtain its explicit objectives, or even if it achieves them and its success is followed by disillusion, the feelings and desires which have given it birth will express themselves in different ways. Instead of a movement for an independent State and a modernized society there might be an outbreak of religious fanaticism, which would not help in the establishment of good relations between the Arabo-Islamic world and the West. Instead of a movement with rational purposes, there might arise one whose only ends were destruction and self-destruction.

6

Which of these paths Arab nationalism will take depends very largely upon the relationship which it establishes, on the one hand with Islam, and on the other with the West.

Although the movements of Arab and of Islamic revival lay emphasis upon different points it is impossible wholly to separate Arab nationalist feeling from Islamic feeling. In most Arabs the two tend to flow together; the movements

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of national and of religious revival are energized by the same complex of desires and emotions within the individuals who have created and who sustain them; and the ordinary Moslem Arab is not conscious of belonging in one aspect of his being to the Arab community, and in another to the Islamic, but rather of belonging to a single integrated 'Arabo-Islamic' community in which he does not clearly distinguish the Arab from the Islamic elements. Even in analysis it is impossible wholly to separate the two. On the one hand there is in Islam no sharp distinction between spiritual and temporal, Church and State; and in consequence a movement of religious reform will have its repercussions in every sphere of social and political life. On the other, many Arab nationalists, especially of the older generation, would define the Arab nation partly in terms of the Islamic religion, which most members of the nation profess, and of which the Holy Book is written in Arabic; and they would therefore regard the preservation and revival of Islam as being among the aims of the nationalist movement.

What has just been said must be qualified in two ways. First, the secular view of life is becoming ever more widespread, especially among the younger generation and among those educated in Europe and America; and it is giving rise to the belief that it is better both for religion and for political activity if the two are kept distinct from one another. Thus it is possible to see the beginning of the idea of a secular nationalism, which rests upon elements of unity other than participation in a common religion; which aims at building a Westernized laic State; and in which therefore Moslems, Christians and atheists alike can join on a footing of equality. This lay nationalism is not consciously hostile to religion, although it is opposed to theocracy; but it is possible that at some time in the future it will come into conflict with Islamic orthodoxy.

Secondly, the connexion between Islam and Arab nationalism is perhaps emphasized less in Syria and Lebanon than in the other parts of Arab Asia. This is so not only because Syrians and Lebanese have assimilated Western thought more deeply than other Arab peoples and are more inclined to adopt modern Western secularism, but also because of the existence of an Arabic-speaking Christian element in the Syrian and Lebanese population. Moslem Arab nationalists

cannot leave the Christians out of account in their plans for the future of Syria and Lebanon, and many of them sincerely desire Christians and Moslems alike to participate in the national community of the future. There are many Christians too who share the ideals of Arab nationalism; and indeed Syrian and Lebanese Christians were among the founders of the national movement, since they saw in the spread of the ideal of national unity the only way of escape from the religious differences which had for so long weakened their country. It is natural that Christian Arab nationalists should define the Arab nation mainly in terms of language, history, and race, and should draw a distinction, perhaps too sharply, between it and the Islamic community.

7

The present attitude of nationalism towards the Western Powers was determined during the years of the First World War and the subsequent peace settlement. Those years were not without their gains. It was then that the Arabs became conscious of their unity and of the strength which might be theirs. They gained collective pride and a memory of things done in common, and also legends and martyrs.

But they were also years of bitterness and disappointment. Freedom and unity seemed for a moment to be within the grasp of the Arabs, but they were snatched away. It has been described in Chapter II how the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were divided from one another into several States, only the most backward of which was recognized as immediately independent, the others being placed under British or French control. This was all the more disappointing because it was Great Britain which had promised the Arabs independence and unity and had appeared to be the friend of Arab nationalism. Thus the movement took on in those years an anti-British and anti-French, and even in general an anti-Western, complexion; indeed the mere fact that Great Britain and France were now in control of the Arab countries would have been enough to give it such a complexion. The hostility was mingled with disappointment, since politically these two Powers had seemed for a moment to be the friends of the nationalists; but also with gratitude, since culturally the movement was deeply in debt to them. The attitude of Arab nationalists to Great Britain and France has therefore

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among the Druzes of Jebel Druze are different from those among the Lebanese Christians. The growth of the Arab nationalist movement has also affected the problem of minorities. It is true that in principle Arab nationalism need not and indeed should not involve a problem of religious minorities. But there are several reasons why at the present day it does involve such a problem. The first reason is to be found in the immaturity of political thinking among the Arabs. Arabism, as the previous chapter made clear, has not yet determined its relationship with Islam; more generally, neither majority nor minorities have yet faced the problem of the connexion between religion and the State. Thus there is a tendency for many of the nationalists, although not their most thoughtful leaders, to regard members of the minorities as imperfect Arabs because they are heterodox Moslems or not Moslems at all; equally there is a tendency among the minorities to be suspicious of nationalism as a movement for unrestrained Sunni ascendancy. Among some of the Christian minorities there is a further tendency to regard the West as their spiritual home, to which they can belong in a way in which they could never belong to the Arabo-Islamic world to whose fringes they have so long clung.

The mutual suspicion has been increased in the last twenty-five years by the bad relations which have existed between the nationalists and the French authorities. In these years Arab nationalism has been largely a movement of opposition to France. Those whose nationalism is still coloured by religion draw from that an additional reason for suspecting the Christians as being of the same religion as the French. But quite apart from religious prejudice, suspicion has inevitably been aroused by the long-standing attachment of certain of the Christian communities to France. Many of the nationalists believe that this attachment has been used by her as an instrument in a policy of dividing, weakening and in other ways opposing the nationalist movement. Those of the minorities who have been used unwittingly in this way they regard as obstacles to the achievement of their aspirations; those who have lent themselves willingly to it they regard as traitors to the national cause.

Even when members of minorities become Arab nationalists, as many of them do, they often wear their nationalism with a difference. It is not only that they tend to emphasize

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points in the nationalist programme other than those which are emphasized by the Moslems; they also sometimes conceive of themselves as having a special duty to perform in the movement. For example, some of the Christian nationalists regard it as their task to mediate Western civilization to the Arabs. This sense of a special duty makes for difference, if not for opposition.

6

This much can be said of the whole of Syria and Lebanon. But if a more detailed analysis is to be attempted, Lebanon must be separated from Syria. While in Syria, and in the Levant States taken as a whole, the Sunni Moslems have an overwhelming preponderance, in Lebanon neither they nor any other community forms an absolute majority of the population, and the number of Christians of different sects is slightly greater than that of Moslems, orthodox and heterodox.

Inside Lebanon also a distinction must be made. As will be described later,[1] the Lebanese Republic of to-day was formed after the First World War, by the addition to the pre-war autonomous Sanjaq of Lebanon, which consisted mainly of Mount Lebanon itself, of certain towns and outlying districts. In the former, the population is almost entirely Christian (mainly Maronite) and Druze. The additions included the coastal towns of Tripoli, Beirut, Saida (Sidon) and Sur (Tyre), and the districts of the Biqa' in the east and Jebel Amil in the south. In the towns the population is largely Sunni Moslem, although there are also numerous Shi'is, Greek Catholics and Orthodox and Armenians (mainly in Beirut). In the Biqa' and Jebel Amil the Shi'i Moslems are predominant, but here again there are large Greek Orthodox and Catholic and other communities.

In Mount Lebanon the majority is Christian, but the Druze community is large and strong enough to have played at least an equal and sometimes a greater part in the history of the Mountain. Thus the sectarian composition of Mount Lebanon is very different from that of the rest of the Mandated Territories. To a great extent also its history has diverged from that of other parts of geographical Syria. This has given rise to a specific Lebanese tradition. It is a tradition of asylum: remnants of sects and tribes, driven for one reason or another

[1] See Chapter IX, p. 172.

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and certain tribes among them persuaded to settle on the land. ooo

Thus in the years between the two wars the Jazirah was almost entirely resettled by immigrant groups. The greater part of the population are still Arab Moslems, but very many of these are nomads; and of the settled population, which in 1938 was estimated at 103,000, more than 20,000 are Christians, while probably a majority and certainly a large proportion of the remainder are Kurds.[1]

Among the settled population the proportion of those whose native language is not Arabic is much larger than in any other part of Syria. Split up between a large number of sects and peoples, none of whom dominates the rest, and lacking the element of stability which an old-established population would give, the Jazirah presents a complex problem, the nature of which is determined by a large number of factors: tension between Christians and Moslems, and between Arabs and Kurds; the everlasting conflict between the Beduin and the sedentary population; and interference by Turkey and Iraq from just across the frontier.

Here, as in Jebel Druze and Latakia, there has long been a conflict between the greater number of French officials, who insist that what the district primarily needs is good and special administration such as the Syrian Government could not give it, and the nationalists, who wish to make it clear from the beginning that the Jazirah is an integral part of Syria. Of the inhabitants, the Arab Moslems are for the most part nationalists, while many of the Arab and other Christians oppose them and claim autonomy. Opposition comes also from those Kurds who demand autonomy and who are being increasingly influenced by Kurdish nationalism. The Kurds have a tribal organization, the most important tribal groups being the Barazi and Milli; and most of them have no political loyalty except to the tribe. The majority are opposed to Turkey and frightened of Arab rule, although there is a continuous process of assimilation to the Arabs; and some of them have a superficial attachment to France. It is only fairly recently that a nationalist movement has arisen among them, directed by the intellectuals in Damascus and elsewhere and organized in the 'Hoybun' party. It aims at the

[1] Another estimate for 1937 was as follows: Arab Moslems 41,900; Kurds 81,450; Christians 31,050; others 4,150; Total 158,550. To this should be added 8,000 Assyrians.

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social and economic characteristics. For example, the Christians accounted in 1938 for about 32 per cent of the total school population, and for an even larger proportion of pupils in the secondary schools. It is important to notice that 32 per cent of the Christian students attended schools controlled mainly by foreign Christian missions, 61 per cent attended private schools mostly maintained by religious communities, and only 7 per cent attended official schools.[1] Since the education given in the first two types of school is sectarian, Christians are receiving a different kind of education from Moslems, a far larger proportion of whom attend official institutions.

Educational differences are reinforced by social ones. The Christians still form a social unit, or rather a series of interconnected units, of which the relations with the Moslem community are peaceful and correct but not in normal circumstances cordial. This is especially true of the older people brought up under the Ottoman régime. The introduction of freer social customs from the West, the spread of education and the growth of the idea of nationalism are helping to make the young less conscious than their elders of their confessional loyalties, and may in the end succeed in breaking down the barriers between the sects and religions. Economically, also, the Christians tend to constitute a more predominantly urban community than the Moslems, with all the differences which that involves, but there is a Christian peasantry in certain parts of the country, similar in many ways to the Moslem peasantry.

In spite of incidents like those of 1860, on the whole the history of Syria has not been one of religious persecution on a large scale, and the Christians have enjoyed long periods of toleration, although not of equality with the Moslems. Such toleration has existed partly because of the long residence of Christians in the country, partly because they were not numerous enough to constitute a serious threat to Moslem supremacy, and partly because clergy and laity alike were for the most part Arabic in language and culture.

On the whole the growth of the nationalist movement has not had unfavourable consequences for the Christians. Individual Christians have played an important part in the movement in Syria as elsewhere. Nor is it merely isolated

[1] Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport*, 1938, p. 91.

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795 individuals who are sympathetic to Arab nationalism. Such
186 sympathy is widespread among the Greek Orthodox. (One reason for this may be that since the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Greek Orthodox have had no external 'protector' and so have had to understand the necessity of being on good terms with their neighbours.) Nationalist ideas are particularly strong in the younger generation, who imbibe them in school and elsewhere. The Uniates tend to be less sympathetic, partly because they are less conscious and proud of their Arab traditions; partly because they are much influenced by French Catholic missionaries and teachers; and partly because of all sections of the population they have been the best treated by the French authorities, so that any relaxation of French control would mean the loss of their privileged position.

The leaders of the nationalist movement have always professed the best possible intentions towards the Christians, and have been quick to disown anything which might give the opposite impression. The periodical crises of national feeling have often been accompanied by scenes of Moslem-Christian fraternization. This attitude on the part of the leaders springs from a genuine desire to create a national unity which will transcend religious differences and make them less acute; and also from the wish not to alienate Western opinion. While, however, the more moderate and responsible nationalists are tolerant on principle and by sentiment, there is a certain suspicion of Christians among their less enlightened followers.

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563 The Druzes and Alawis in the six provinces are outlying sections of the larger communities in Jebel Druze and the district of Latakia respectively, and do not require separate discussion here. The Isma'ilis form a compact community in the province of Hama; they keep much to themselves and want only to be left alone. The Circassians are to be found in the Hauran, on the northern frontier and on the Euphrates; they still constitute a separate entity with their own language and customs. During the Syrian revolt of 1925 they were used as irregulars by the French authorities, and this made them more unpopular with the Arabs than before. Some of them have at times demanded local autonomy, but

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648 The great failure of French rule was to win the approval
18 and co-operation of the Syrian and the bulk of the Lebanese people. A large part of the population, and especially of the more articulate elements in it, was from the very beginning highly critical of French rule if not irreconcilably opposed to it; and criticism and opposition did not grow less with the passing of time.

To a great extent this attitude was based upon particular grievances, real or imagined. It was complained that France had failed to provide a reasonable standard of administration. The French officials were too often corrupt, avaricious and arbitrary; while the Syrian and Lebanese officials were not wisely chosen, properly trained, or given a due measure of responsibility. In consequence of this, the development of public services, even in spheres far removed from controversy and where the necessity of advance is generally recognized, was unsatisfactory, and Syria and Lebanon fell behind the neighbouring countries in providing amenities of life and opportunities of work.

The French officials, the indictment continues, not only proved themselves inefficient, but adopted a harmful attitude towards those whom they ruled. They did not grasp the special obligations of the Mandate, but treated the country as if it were a French colony, and the inhabitants as on a level with France's African subjects; and at least in the early part of the Mandatory period they did not hesitate to express their contempt for the Arabs. The use of Sengalese troops first to expel Faisal and then on garrison duty seems to the Syrians and Lebanese to be a sign of this contempt.

It was further alleged that the elementary rights of the individual were denied: there was no freedom of speech, of assembly or of publication; imprisonment without trial was frequent. A particularly widespread complaint was of the activities of the officials of the 'Services Spéciaux', who, it is claimed, far exceeded their duties and often became petty despots in their districts, and even fomented disorder for their own or for France's benefit.

There were also various economic and financial grievances. It was said that the tariff-system did not give adequate protection to local enterprise; and often the extent to which France's hands were tied in this regard by the provisions of

the Mandate was ignored. The grant of all the more important concessions to French companies was widely resented. The terms of the contracts between the Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments were criticized as being too favourable to the Banque; and the linking of the currency to the fluctuating franc was resented as introducing into the country a factor of economic instability which might have been avoided. The arrangements by which French military and civil personnel could obtain imported goods duty-free, and the abuses which sprang from it, formed another common grievance. Finally, there was the widely-believed accusation that the French deliberately drained the country of the gold which it possessed in Ottoman times.

The inadequacies of the French administration were resented by almost all in both Syria and Lebanon, whatever their general political views. But there was also a large section of the population which opposes French rule on grounds of principle. The majority of the nationalists always refused to recognize the Mandate, which they regarded as contrary alike to the 'natural right' of nations to independence, to the promises made by the Allies during the first world war, and to the spirit of Article 22 of the Covenant, which provides for administrative advice and assistance, but not for semi-colonial rule. Besides opposing the Mandate as such, they resented the way in which it was imposed upon the Syrian people, and still more the way in which it was carried out. Not only was no independent Government established, but no appreciable progress was made towards that end. Only half-hearted attempts were made to set up representative institutions; little was done to create an efficient civil service; what was more important still, the division of the country into a number of States, and the encouragement given to separatism and to the intransigence of the minorities, seriously diminished the possibility of establishing a stable and representative Government. In the light of these facts, the nationalists believed that France never made a sincere attempt to fulfil the obligations imposed upon her by the Mandate in virtue of which she ruled Syria and Lebanon. They believed also that the longer France remained in the Levant, the more she would gradually destroy the possibility of national revival and self-government.

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Underlying all these grievances was resentment at the division of geographical Syria into French and British Mandated Territories: a division which was criticized both on grounds of principle and because of the economic and administrative dislocation which it caused. It is true that France was not wholly to blame for this, but it was an additional reason why the nationalists wished to obtain freedom of action.

10

The ultimate political objectives of Arab nationalists in Syria and Lebanon are the same as those of the nationalists in other parts of Arab Asia: the unity and independence of the Arab people. But in so far as the political fate of Syria and Lebanon has been different from that of the other Arab regions, the immediate objectives of the Arab nationalist movement in the French Mandated Territories have differed from its objectives elsewhere. From 1918 to 1941 these immediate objectives were to bring about a radical change in French policy and to replace Mandatory rule by genuine self-government.

Although Arab nationalists were united in desiring the attainment of these objectives, they differed upon the means by which and the speed with which they hoped to attain them. Some of them did not consider that Syria and Lebanon were yet fit for complete independence, and advocated co-operation with the Mandatory Power, the gradual extension of self-government, the creation of a modern administrative machine and an educated ruling-class and electorate, and thus the achievement of independence by gradual stages. They included some considerable personalities but were never able to organize themselves into an effective political group. Others, who refused to recognize either the Mandate or the administrative partition of the French Mandated Territories, demanded immediate independence and unity.

The adoption of one or other of these attitudes did not necessarily imply friendship or hostility towards France as such. Even among so-called 'extremists' there was a widespread admiration for French culture, and a recognition that without the influence of that culture the Arab literary and political revivals would have been impossible. Those who opposed French policy were not necessarily hostile to France; and those who were Francophil were not necessarily free from

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all distrust of French policy in the Levant. To call the nationalist opposition anti-French or xenophobe would be misleading, although it does contain elements to which those terms could be applied.

Nor would it be correct to regard the 'moderate' and 'extremist' groups as sharply differentiated from one another. They differed not on fundamental questions but on questions of means; they were akin to one another in sympathies, and individuals from the two often worked together. In so far as they were groups at all, they were groups of which the membership was constantly shifting. This was true also of the differences inside the 'extremist' section. There were some who saw no hope of obtaining independence except by the use of force. There were others who hoped to obtain it by the negotiation with France of a treaty similar in its nature and its terms to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, which terminated Great Britain's Mandate over Iraq. There might be a few who disapproved of methods of violence on principle, and at the other extreme a few who disapproved of negotiating a treaty which would involve compromise and concession. But the majority would have supported negotiations for a treaty when they seemed likely to be fruitful, and have been willing to resort to violence if that should seem the most hopeful or the only way of attaining their objectives. As Chapters X-XII will show, the history of the years between 1920 and 1941 saw several changes of attitude on the part of the nationalists.

During those years, however, the nationalist movement was always essentially one of opposition. In Iraq, nationalism achieved its first objective, independence, comparatively early, and was brought face to face with practical problems of administration and construction. But in Syria and Lebanon the first objective was not so easily achieved, and in 1941, after more than twenty years of effort, the nationalists were still striving towards self-government, which obsessed them to the exclusion of other aims.[1]

[1] Although the declarations of independence made in 1941 changed the formal nature of French rule in Syria and Lebanon, they did not materially alter the attitude of the population to France. The complaints which were made during the earlier period are still made, and the Syrians and Lebanese are less willing than ever to acquiesce in French predominance. See Chapter XII and Postscript.

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independence, and less disposed to establish close relations with Syria and other Arab countries than the latter.[1]

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The State of the Alawis also remained tranquil, once the rising of 1919-1921 had been suppressed. The effort of the Mandatory authorities was directed mainly to encouraging the communal consciousness of the inhabitants (often by playing on their fears); and to raising their material and intellectual level through such measures as the creation of educational and medical services and the giving of assistance to agriculture. In these tasks they had considerable success; socially and economically the district progressed. Further, a greater degree of equality than had previously existed was established between the Alawis, Sunnis and Christians. The administration was mainly in French hands, although there was a Representative Council and efforts were made to increase the share of the inhabitants in the government, as trained and suitable administrators became available. In 1930 an Organic Law was promulgated defining the nature and activities of the political institutions of the State, whose name was then changed to 'the Government of Latakia'.

The Alawis and many of the Christians were content to have no direct connection with the State of Syria, and among the former there developed a more conscious particularist spirit than they had previously possessed. But the Sunnis, here as in Lebanon, disapproved of a situation in which from being the dominant class they became a minority, and accused the Mandatory Power of neglecting their interests in favour of those of the Alawis; they, and all those who held Arab nationalist views, saw clearly the dangers in France's policy of encouraging the separatism of the Alawis and teaching them to rely on foreign support. They demanded the reincorporation of the region in the State of Syria, and their demand was supported by the Sunnis and Arab nationalists in Syria.

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The history of the other two States was not so tranquil. Alike in Syria and Jebel Druze unrest and discontent appeared in the early years of the Mandate, and issued finally in the revolt of 1925-1926.

[1] For recent changes in Lebanese feeling, see Postscript.

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from the Mandatory Power to the Syrian Government being completed within four years.[1]

The Treaty was immediately laid before the Chamber. Its reception by the nationalists inside and outside the Chamber was so unfavourable as to make it clear that it had no chance of acceptance. Accordingly the High Commissioner suspended the sittings of the Chamber, withdrew from its cognizance the terms of the Treaty, and authorized the President of the Republic to govern provisionally by means of decree-laws. A year later, in November, 1934, he suspended the Chamber *sine die*. These acts aroused the resentment and indignation of the nationalists, but in general the country remained quiet, apart from local and ephemeral disturbances, throughout 1934 and 1935. In March, 1934, the Government of Haqqi al-Azm was replaced by that of Shaikh Taj ad-Din al-Hasani, which continued in office for practically two years.

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Perhaps the most important development of the early 1930's was the growth of a number of political parties with a special appeal to the educated youth of the towns, and therefore of great significance in a country whose political circumstances gave peculiar weight to the actions of the young. Very different from one another in their doctrines and their aims, these parties were alike in that they endeavoured to establish a degree of organization and cohesion which older parties had not for the most part possessed ; alike, too, in that they tried to base their activities not upon gusts of feeling or some immediate objective, but upon systematic and reasoned doctrines. They expressed and attempted to direct the spirit of the youth of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo and the other towns : a restless youth, discontented both with its foreign masters and with its own older generation, conscious of talents and ideas and cramped by lack of opportunity, drawn simultaneously towards and away from the West, eager and suspicious, hasty and thoughtful. Even when the youth-movements took a paramilitary form, that does not necessarily mean that they were Fascist ; they were merely endeavouring to satisfy certain human needs which in more fortunate

[1] For text, see Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1933* (Paris, 1934), pp. 189–95.

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countries are satisfied by days of national celebration, by military service and voluntary organizations.

One of these organizations was the 'Syrian National Party', founded by Antun Saadeh, a Lebanese Christian brought up in South America. This Party professed or rather formulated the specific Syrian as distinct from Arab nationalism which has already been mentioned.[1] At first a secret society, it was discovered by the authorities in 1935, and its leading members imprisoned. From that time it grew in size and importance, in spite of the many obstacles in its path. These obstacles were of various types: the hostility of the authorities, who more than once dissolved the party; the opposition of the Arab nationalists, who regarded it as a separatist movement; and the widespread belief that the party was in too close touch with European Fascism. That it was able to hold its own was also due to several factors. First, it made a more determined effort than any other organization to think out the whole national problem in all its aspects, and to formulate a programme in the light of clear and valid political principles. Again, it was rigidly organized on the membership principle, with a hierarchy, a logical division of functions and a strict discipline. Finally, its leader was a man of courage, decision and powerful intellect.

The party reached its zenith a year or two before the beginning of the war. It had several thousand adherents, largely but not exclusively Lebanese Christians. With the departure of the leader for South America in 1938 a decline set in, but whether temporary or permanent has still to be seen.

Simultaneously there grew up a number of Arab nationalist youth organizations. The most influential of them was the League of National Action, which tried to weld into a unity the youth of all the Arab countries. Its form was that of a federation of local societies. It stood for the independence and union of the Arab world, and was not prepared to accept any agreement with the Western Powers unless they should completely renounce their imperialist designs. Its programme was formulated at a conference held in Lebanon in 1933, and for some years after that it flourished in the Syrian towns, But it was never important in the other Arab countries, and even in Syria it suffered an irreparable blow by the death of

[1] See Chapter VI.

National Bloc, Mazhar Raslan as Governor of Latakia and Nasib al-Bakri as Governor of Jebel Druze.

Although the Treaty had not yet been ratified by the French Parliament, it was agreed that the transitional period should be regarded as starting on January 1st, 1937. A beginning was made with the transfer to the Syrian Government of functions hitherto exercised by the French authorities. The Government was given the right freely to prepare and carry out its budget, and a certain control over the police; in principle the High Commissioner ceased to exercise his right to veto legislation, and the 'conseillers' to control ministerial acts. But the Mandatory Power still retained the conduct of foreign relations, the ultimate responsibility for public order and certain administrative services such as the supervision of the Beduin tribes.

These events seemed to show that the policy of the Bloc was successful. It was still united; it had an overwhelming majority in the Chamber; its adherents filled the offices of the Government; it commanded a large measure of support in the country, especially among the younger generation.

Opposition to the Bloc existed, but it was so far largely inarticulate and undirected. It consisted of a handful of Deputies; of some extreme Arab nationalist organizations, which refused to recognize the Mandate and regarded co-operation with the French as treason; and of the separatist movements among the Alawis and Druzes and in the Jazirah.

The hopes of Syrian independence reached their climax in the celebrations which marked the return to Syria of the newly-amnestied exiles, Dr. Shahbandar and Sultan al-Atrash in May, 1937, the Amir Shakib Arslan and Ihsan al-Jabiri in June. It seemed as if the country were entering upon a new period of national construction under leaders whose patriotic energy had only been strengthened by disappointment, imprisonment, and long years of exile.

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The next two years saw the collapse of these hopes. The claims of Turkey to Alexandretta, the growth of separatist movements, the failure of the French Government to secure the ratification of the Treaty, the unrest caused by the disturbances in Palestine, the administrative failure of the Nationalist Government and finally the growth of an internal

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631 both districts for a period of five years from the coming into
648 force of the Treaty.

631 The Treaty and the new régime were received with approval
664 by a number of the Druzes and Alawis; even former
196 autonomists expressed their loyalty to the Syrian Government.
This reaction, however, was transient and deceptive. In
Jebel Druze discord began to arise early in 1937, after the
appointment of Nasib al-Bakri, a Damascene Moslem, as
first Governor of the province. A powerful party demanded
the appointment of a Druze notable, Hasan al-Atrash, and
also a large measure of autonomy; the nationalists asserted
that it was encouraged to go to extremes by local French
officials. There were also, however, many Druzes who sup-
ported the nationalist Government and the Governor whom it
had appointed. Attempts were made with no more than a
temporary success to reconcile the advocates of separatism
with those of unity. The disturbances were not ended until
the Governor resigned and was replaced after an interval by
Hasan al-Atrash. By the end of 1937 the Jebel was quiet
enough to enable Parliamentary elections to be held. The
calm continued throughout 1938, but at the beginning of 1939
[669] disturbances began once more. The separatist group accused
the Syrian Government of bad faith, expelled Syrian officials
from the province and declared the independence of Jebel
Druze under the protection of France.

A similar process had meanwhile been occurring in the
Alawi district, which was known under the new régime as the
Province of Latakia. Here, as in Jebel Druze, there was
tranquillity at first, and Parliamentary elections were held in
1937. But the calm was short-lived. The Alawi notables
protested against the appointment of Syrian Moslem officials,
and more especially of nationalist Governors, first Mazhar
Raslan from Homs and then Ihsan al-Jabiri, a Sunni Moslem
from Aleppo. The nationalist policy of assimilation was
perhaps carried out hastily and tactlessly, the Governor
alienated large sections of the population, and at the beginning
of 1939 armed bands rose in revolt under the leadership of the
deputy Sulaiman Murshid, a brigand who had proclaimed
himself 'God' and had secured considerable local influence
with the help of certain French officials. At about the same
time the visit of the High Commissioner, M. Puaux, was made
the occasion for demonstrations in favour of autonomy. Soon

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afterwards the Governor found his position impossible and was compelled to abandon it. He was not replaced, his powers being assumed in July by the High Commissioner's Delegate.

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The Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 effected no formal change in the status of the Jazirah, but its signature was followed by the replacement of the French officials who had ruled it until then, by Syrian administrators. Here as in Jebel Druze and the Alawi region discontent soon showed itself. There were some who felt and expressed loyalty to the new/national Government. But there was an important element which demanded that the ties between the Jazirah and the central Government in Damascus should be as loose as possible, or should be severed altogether. Their minimum demand was that the local officials should be chosen from among the local population; their maximum, for complete separation from Syria. Their discontent was increased by the lack of wisdom shown by some of the more irresponsible nationalists, although the Government itself acted on the whole in a conciliatory manner. The autonomists appear to have been encouraged by certain of the local French officials; the nationalists claimed, indeed, that here as among the Alawis and Druzes the minorities would have acquiesced in their rule had it not been for the activities of French agents. The separatists were themselves divided on everything except their dislike of being ruled by the nationalists of Damascus. Some were Kurds, who objected mainly to being ruled by Arabs; others Christians, who objected also to being ruled by Moslems. These two groups sometimes but not always acted together during the years from 1936 to 1939.

Serious trouble first broke out in June, 1937, when the Kurds of Hassetche revolted against the appointment of nationalist officials from outside the Jazirah. The rising was quelled with the aid of the French military authorities, but it was soon taken up in Qamishli and elsewhere by the Christians, who demanded a special statute similar to that of Alexandretta, an administration which would give equal weight to the rights of all sects and races, and the withdrawal from the province of officials who had not been chosen from the local population.

Mediterranean, by General Dentz. These measures could not, however, prevent the spread of pro-Allied sympathies both in the army and in the civil administration; towards the end of 1940 a number of those suspected of having such sympathies were arrested and interned.

While Axis interference was increasing, Franco-British relations in the Levant as elsewhere were becoming ever more strained. The British blockade was extended to Syria and Lebanon, trade between which and the neighbouring Arab countries greatly diminished in consequence. Travel between Palestine and the French Mandated Territories was severely restricted. The French authorities prohibited public listening to British radio programmes. From time to time, moreover, the French authorities issued statements to the effect that the French army of the Levant still existed and was prepared to defend French territory against aggression from whatever direction it might come.

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Among the population, the effect of the French capitulation and of subsequent events was not so much to bring new tendencies into existence as to encourage those which already existed. The growth of Axis influence and of British determination to oppose it increased the fear that the country would become a battleground. The restriction of trade with Palestine, Iraq and Egypt, and the persistence of hoarding and profiteering in spite of all measures taken to stop them, brought nearer the spectre of famine. The ambiguous position of France after the Armistice made it even more difficult than before for Syrians and Lebanese to take sides in the war. There were, it is true, a small number who approved of the New Order in France, and extreme nationalists who desired a German victory; there were others who, from principle or interest, desired a British occupation of the country. But for the majority of politically conscious Syrians, the collapse of France and her subsequent difficulties served not so much to throw them into the arms of her former ally or her former enemy, as to make them more than ever eager to rid themselves of French and all foreign domination. They felt it a humiliation to be subjected to a defeated and weak nation; and with the withdrawal of France from the League

of Nations on April 18th, 1941, they regarded the juridical basis of French Mandatory rule as having disappeared.

Political meetings and demonstrations being forbidden, nationalist uneasiness remained for the most part beneath the surface throughout 1940. But it revealed itself in the press of other Arab countries and the activities of their Governments; this was especially true of Iraq. Thus in July, 1940, Nuri as-Said, then Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Ankara, Beirut and Damascus in order to discuss with the Turkish and French authorities and with prominent Syrians and Lebanese the future of the French Mandated Territories. At the conclusion of his journey he issued a statement to the effect that both the Turkish and Iraqi Governments thought that Syria should be for the Syrians and that the country should enjoy complete independence.

A symptom of the prevalent unrest was the murder of Dr. Shahbandar in Damascus in the same month, while his political influence was at its height. Within a few days his assassins were arrested. After the preliminary investigation had been completed a special tribunal was set up to try them and certain other persons believed to be implicated in the crime. Among the latter were three of the leaders of the National Bloc, Jamil Mardam Bey, Saadullah al-Jabiri and Lutfi al-Haffar. They were accused of deliberate complicity in the assassination. Almost at the same time as the accusation against them was published, all three left Syria for Baghdad.

The trial of the accused persons began in December, 1940. In the course of it the leader of the assassins made a complete confession: their motive in deciding to kill Dr. Shahbandar had been religious, since they regarded him as one of those responsible for the decay of Islam; they had tried to throw the blame for their crime upon the leaders of the Bloc, who in reality had had nothing to do with it. The trial ended at the beginning of January, with the condemnation of six persons to death and several others to imprisonment, and the complete exoneration of Jamil Mardam Bey, Lutfi al-Haffar and Saadullah al-Jabiri. The sentences were carried out immediately.

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At the beginning of 1941 the unrest which had been for so

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

000 Lebanon the Government of Sami as-Sulh succeeded that of
645 Ahmad ad-Da'uq. In Syria, Hasan al-Hakim resigned in April, 1942, and was succeeded by Husni al-Barazi, who himself gave way in January, 1943, to Jamil al-Ulshi. These changes had only a very limited significance.

648 This failure to restore the constitutional Government
186 increased the discontent which had already been caused in both Syria and Lebanon by the way in which their independence had been proclaimed. The administrative methods of the Free French officials were also much criticized; more particularly, a general contempt was felt for the many officials who had served Vichy and had only gone over to Free France after the occupation of the country in 1941. Thus the belief grew up that Syria and Lebanon had gained nothing by their change of masters. It was a belief held not only by the political classes but by ordinary citizens who resented the inefficiency of the French administration; not only by Arab nationalists but even by many of the Lebanese Christians, who could not feel towards the Free French the admiration, gratitude and trust which they had had for France as a great Power. In the circumstances it was natural that Great Britain should be largely blamed for the actions of her ally.

645 One consequence of the discontent was a revival in the
665 power of the National Bloc. The dissensions between its leaders were patched up, and the Bloc united in its demand for the restoration of the Chamber of 1936-1939 or else the holding of fresh elections. Its spokesman was Shukri al-Quwatli, whose reputation had grown steadily throughout the years. In October, 1941, shortly after the Allied occupation, he absented himself from Syria on a visit to Arabia and Iraq; but after his return to Damascus in September, 1942, he became once more the dominant figure of the political scene. Side by side with the revival of the Bloc there went a growth in the size and influence of the Socialist and Communist movements; this was due not so much to the spread of Marxist doctrines as to the universal discontent with the existing order and the eagerness to snatch at any hope of change.

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722 In Syria and Lebanon alike, the attention of the greater part of the population was concentrated upon the economic problems of the war. Two of them were peculiarly important.

iii. The 'Sûreté Générale', the organization responsible for internal security. It had always been in French hands, although in principle the local police and gendarmerie were under the control of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments.

iv. The control of the Beduin.

v. The censorship of the press, which was in French hands, although there was also a British military censor. (Shortly after the accession of the new Syrian and Lebanese Governments to power, they set up their own political censorships, which did not, however, replace that of the French, but were additional to it.)

Thirdly, in addition to these legislative and administrative limitations, there were various restrictions even on those powers which the Governments possessed :

i. Their freedom of action was restricted by the great influence of the administrative and technical 'conseillers', who, although officials of the Governments and in theory subordinate to the Ministers whom they advised, were in practice almost all-powerful in the departments to which they were attached.

ii. Another restriction arose from the existence of the officers of the 'Services Spéciaux' who were scattered throughout the country. In theory they were the Delegate-General's intelligence officers, but in practice they had always exercised a virtually unlimited authority in their regions : an authority which they had enforced where necessary by means of the 'Gardes Mobiles', a semi-military police force which they had at their disposal. Among other things, the control of the frontiers was in their hands.

The nationalists had always demanded the recognition of the two Parliaments as the sole sources of legislation ; the transfer of the Common Interests and other similar services to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments ; the abolition of the 'Services Spéciaux' officers and a curtailment in the powers of the 'conseillers'. It was clear that these demands would be pressed with vigour by the new Nationalist Governments, partly because of the principles involved but also because of concrete advantages to be gained from them. For example, control of the customs would give them power to regulate fiscal policy and thus indirectly to assist industry and trade, and would place in their hands an important source of

S 641 L 648 they thought fit; or in general to enter into any engagements which would place obstacles in the way of their closer association with their neighbours. Nor would they give a privileged position to any other Power. It was clear, however, that they would be willing to negotiate treaties of alliance and friendship with all the major Powers, France among them, and to take their full share in the task of guaranteeing international security, under the supervision of whatever international authority might be established. They would also be willing to recognize the position of French cultural and economic institutions functioning in the Levant States and to give guarantees for their freedom of action; for example, they would give assurances for the position of French concessionary companies and French schools, always provided that they confined themselves to their proper functions and did not use their freedom for political ends. They would also give guarantees to French officials and advisers in their service.

In the course of 1944, tentative discussions but not official negotiations took place with a view to clarifying the position of the two parties. They led, however, to no agreement between the two points of view, and at the end of 1944 the question of the treaty was no nearer settlement than it had been at the beginning.

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S 648 186 The great mass of Syrian political opinion was behind the Government in its attitude towards the Army and the Treaty; if it differed from the Government, it differed in being more intransigent and less inclined to endure delays or make concessions. It was clear that, should a clash come, the French authorities could not fall back upon their old expedient of installing a 'moderate' ministry of puppets. The present governing group indeed was the most moderate that could be expected. It had already lost some of its popular support and had been severely criticized in the Chamber on account of its efforts to restrain the impatience of the people, and was only kept in power by the absence of any alternative and the personal ascendancy of the President.

L 648 186 In Lebanon, too, the attitude defined in the preceding section was held by the greater part of the Government and of the political public, but not so unanimously and unreservedly

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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1952 and he has obvious affinities with General Neguib of Egypt whom he visited later in the year.

The threat of Zionism is considered very real in Syria and Shishakli has declared that Syria has not given up hope of a revision of the present position. Between March and May 1951 a flare-up over Lake Huleh brought an offer of Iraqi aid to Syria, but hostilities between Syria and Israel were localized and stifled without leading to a general outbreak of war. All Syrians wish Israel ill; fear of Israeli expansion remains and is fostered by the Government.

In internal politics, the most progressive measures which have yet been considered are land reform and the partition of state lands. There is little unrest among the people, who generally want to live their lives without undue government interference. Nationalism of two kinds exists: a nascent patriotism that has for the first time the support of the rulers, and a narrow xenophobia that, while less extreme than in Egypt, is more pronounced in Syria than in Lebanon.

(*b*) LEBANON

Lebanon is a republic of which the Chamber of Deputies was till 1953 elected by direct manhood suffrage but in that year women were permitted to vote in the election. By convention, the President of the Republic must be a Christian and is normally a Maronite, the Prime Minister must be a Sunni Muslim and the President of the Chamber a Shii Muslim. The table on p. 466 above shows the division of parliamentary seats between the religious sects; a scrupulous observance of these quotas is evident even in the civil service establishments. The existence of a Christian majority is held to be essential for the survival of Lebanon as a separate state and so, in June 1950, it was found convenient to extend the franchise to Lebanese abroad (of whom the majority are Christian) and to increase the number of deputies from 55 to 77, but in November 1952, under a new electoral law, the number was reduced to 44. The Muslim rate of natural increase is higher than that of the Christians and it is probably for this reason that no census has been taken since. In other ways the constitution and administration are similar to those of Syria already described.

Internal Politics

As in Syria, a European type of political party system has not yet evolved and the struggle has been not only between different cliques of ruling families backed by great commercial wealth, but also between these rich groups on the one hand and

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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433 is a modern glass factory for window and mirror glass and for glass containers, with a total estimated annual capacity of over 14,000 tons. This enterprise has suffered from the fact that the sand has to be imported and also from being built before the necessary export market had been secured to keep its three ovens working. Flour mills are plentiful and more are to be constructed; the production of flour is about 400,000 tons a year. In Damascus there are two spaghetti factories and starch is also produced. Tinned fruit, jam, chocolates, and sweets are also produced in Damascus and there are factories for matches (output 45 million boxes in 1952), margarine, soft drinks, and shoes as well as a number of tanneries and workshops in Aleppo and Damascus. A paper mill has recently begun production, with an output of 4 million square metres of corrugated paper and cardboard boxes in 1952.

SYRIAN INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY
(Estimates for 1952)

Number of Factories	*Tons Capacity*
2 Cement	200,000
1 Sugar	10,000
1 Asphalt	variable
9 Edible oil*	12,000
68 Raw cotton ginning	600,000
3 Food preserving (major)	5,000
1 Glass (plate and rolled)	7,500
(containers)	8,000
3 Tobacco	2,000

* Olive and cotton seed.

(SOURCE: *Statistical Abstract of Syria, 1951–2*, Damascus 1952.)

[186] Industry contributes only about a half as much as agriculture to Syria's gross national product, but the spirit of nationalism has led the Government to give special support to local industries although not all are economically sound. As Syria lacks industrial raw materials, industries based on local agricultural produce should be encouraged rather than those which depend on imported raw materials and foreign markets.

Finance

436 The Syrian pound of 100 piastres (reputedly backed as to
648 60 per cent by gold and foreign currency) is linked to the French franc. Syria is a member of the International Monetary Fund and of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, with a quota of $6½ million. War-time inflation subsided
435 by the end of 1948, but with the Korean boom in primary
439 product prices and the subsequent export surpluses and heavy

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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is a very high figure, representing more than 50 per cent of the total land under cultivation, and the United States Agricultural Attache is inclined to believe that the Ministry's figures include the total area served by irrigation systems, whether or not all the land receives water each year.

There are no large-scale irrigation works in Syria. State and local governments have constructed and now maintain a number of small dams, diversions, and canals, but the total area served by these public works in 1951 was only 100,000 acres. Several other projects, scheduled for completion within the next three or four years, will increase the area under public works another 100,000 acres. Most of these projects are being financed by the federal government out of its regular budget.

By far the largest area is served by small diversions operated by individuals. The next largest and fastest growing area under irrigation is that served by mechanical pumps. The number of pumps doubled from 1950 to 1951 and the area irrigated increased three times. These pumps are used mostly for drawing water from streams.

In the absence of detailed surveys, accurate estimates as to how much water might be available from all sources are impossible to obtain. Draining the Ghab Swamps on the Orontes River west of Aleppo to bring another 100,000 acres into cultivation is now being studied by a Dutch engineering firm, and a large dam on the Euphrates River to impound water in sufficient volume to serve an additional 750,000 acres is under consideration. Several million acres of land along the Euphrates River probably are suitable for cultivation from the standpoint of soil if water becomes available. At the present time irrigation along the Euphrates is limited to the low-lying land between the banks of the river. Through the centuries the river has cut a bed from a half mile to as much as 10 miles wide through the plain, which is now 30 to 50 feet above the water level. It has proved too expensive for individuals to use pumps to pull the water from the river for irrigation.

The same general condition prevails on the main tributary of the Euphrates, the Kabur. Numerous pumps have been installed along the Kabur, and a gravity system in the north, operated by a small dam and canals, is being extended under a current program. It is possible the water would be adequate to extend the gravity system slightly in the southern reaches of the river.

Water might be diverted also from the Tigris River which runs across the northeastern border of Syria. Extensive use of water from any of these international rivers, however, very likely would involve agreements with neighboring countries. Additional water might be provided also by the other rivers in the country. All of these proposals involve tremendously expensive projects beyond the means of the country to finance without outside help.

CAPITAL AND CREDIT

The highly nationalistic attitude of the Syrians damages the chances of private industry's securing a foreign loan. A recent law requiring all foreign operations to have Syrian managers and at least 50 per cent Syrian capital, together with the questionable security, makes sizable foreign investments unlikely. Under these conditions any foreign loans probably will be made to the government. The Syrian Government has made an obvious point of not obligating itself to another foreign power, and it is unlikely it will accept

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East .
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471 a loan directly from another government. This attitude is illustrated clearly
●186 in the refusal of Syria to sign an agreement with Point Four.
648 A loan from an international body is another matter, and the country is seeking a loan of several million dollars from the International Bank for development of transportation, particularly roads in the Jezira, and port facilities at Latakia.

454 Without a large-scale public works program, only minor improvements
241 can be made to the existing system. However, opportunities exist for increasing production through private investment.

The good crops of 1950, sold at exceptionally high prices, resulted in high profits and the accumulation of considerable capital. The hope of continued high profits caused much of this capital to be re-invested in equipment and farm improvements. The same incentive also brought out new capital which never before had been invested in agriculture. Judging from the number of tractors, combines and accessories, and irrigation pumps purchased during 1950 and 1951, the investment in agricultural equipment in these two years exceeded the total up to that time. Unprecedented expenditures for general farm improvements also were made, an exceptional step in a country without a history of investment in agricultural development beyond the acquisition of land and a few simple facilities. The capital base has been small. Production has about equaled consumption. There has been little surplus for savings. The few families with capital have used their funds in other ways, seldom for agriculture. But the experience of 1951 was not encouraging for long-continued investment in agricultural development. These investments were costly, many farmers paying double the United States prices for equip-

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These farmers are typical of those in northern Syria. All the tenants of one landlord usually live in villages like this one near Aleppo. Villages vary in size from a few hundred to several thousand depending on the size of the farm.

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
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Chapter 20

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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EDUCATION in Syria underwent a process of radical change in the years 1943–46. As Syria was under French mandate prior to World War II, the educational system had been gradually shaped after the French model with a twelve-year ladder of general education involving a primary-certificate examination, an examination for the *brevet*, and examinations for the *Baccalauréat*, First and Second Parts, the former divided into scientific and literary sections, and the latter into mathematics and philosophy sections. While instruction was in Arabic, French occupied a prominent place in the curriculum. The French adviser to the Ministry of Education wielded decisive influence over the educational decisions of the Ministry. Almost all educational missions were sent to France, and French-trained Syrians held the key positions in administration and teaching.

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With the declaration of the independence of Syria in 1941 and the holding of new elections which resulted in a nationalist victory, it was natural that the new Syrian government should wish to pursue a national policy in education, free from French influences, and calculated primarily to develop a Syrian-Arab type of education.

In order to do this, the Syrian government procured the services of the well-known Arab educator, Sati' al-Husri, a man of outstanding ability who, after making a special study of Swiss, French, and Belgian education, had become the most prominent educator in Turkey prior to 1914. After the separation of the Arab provinces from Turkey he joined the short-lived Arab government of the late King Faysal in Syria as its Minister of Education. Upon the fall of this government he accompanied King Faysal to Iraq where he became Director General of Education, laying the main foundation of the Iraqi educational system and continuing to exercise considerable influence on that system until 1936. He left Iraq in 1941 to reside in Lebanon, and since he was of Syrian origin, he was invited by the Syrian government to study its educational system and report on

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
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possible reforms. He brought to his task a decided nationalist outlook and considerable experience with the problems of education in the Near East. His sixteen reports, written between March and July 1944, have been published in one volume.[1] The recommendations of these reports served with very slight changes as the basis for the new educational organization in Syria, and inspired the laws and regulations which are now in force. The new policies constituted a sharp turn from French educational policies as they had been applied in Syria and caused considerable controversy and some armed conflict as late as 1945.

One of the causes of contention was the new education law (No. 121, "Embodying the Organization of Public Education") which was passed in December 1944. It provided, among other things, that no foreign language was to be taught in elementary schools. This meant the abolition of French from elementary schools, where it had formerly been required. The new law provided that a first foreign language was to be taught beginning with the first secondary year and a second foreign language beginning with the fifth year. Students were given their choice, thus putting French on an equal footing with any other foreign language—notably English, which was becoming increasingly popular.

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The Franco-Syrian clash of May 1945, when the French bombarded Damascus, resulted in the boycotting of French schools by the Syrian population, and they were compelled to close. As the year 1945–46 approached, French schools were told that to be allowed to reopen they would be required to register with the Ministry of Education, submit to supervision by the Ministry, follow the syllabuses of the Ministry in the teaching of the Arabic language, Arab history and geography, and comply with certain other conditions. Almost all French schools failed to do this and, therefore, remained closed. A few schools formerly registered as French now registered as national schools, put a Syrian citizen at the head of the school, and were allowed to open. These were usually schools run by Syrian monks or sisters.

The closing of the French schools, which had an enrollment of 19,503 in 1944–45, created a serious situation for the Ministry of Education. Thousands of students were confronted with the possibility of not being able to attend school, at the same time that the demand for education was increasing rapidly. The government, therefore, took drastic measures. A special budget annex was passed. Six new secondary schools and 52 new

[1] Sati' al-Husri, *Reports on the State of Education in Syria and Recommendations for Its Reform* (Damascus: Ministry of Education, Republic of Syria, Dar al-Hilal Press, 1944) 304 pp. (In Arabic.) Most of the statistical data on education in this chapter come from the al-Husri reports unless otherwise identified.

63:Simmons et al G-8 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
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POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Population

The people of Syria are predominantly of ancient Semitic stock, modified by centuries of conquest, and Arabic in culture, language and religion. The population, however, includes numerous minority groups, some of which exist as compact communities with distinctive customs and traditions. The official method of enumeration is on the basis of religious affiliation. In 1949, the population was estimated at about 3,177,700, exclusive of undetermined numbers of Bedouin, representing less than 10 per cent of the total. Approximately 86 per cent of the inhabitants were adherents of Islam; about 69 per cent belonged to the Sunni sect. The heterodox sects consisted of roughly 355,500 Alawites, 100,600 Druses, 32,800 Ismailites, 13,700 Shiites and 2,900 Yazides.

Syria, like Lebanon, has important indigenous Christian minorities, which together account for almost 14 per cent of the population. As of 1949, the Greek Orthodox Church claimed about 153,900 members; the Armenian Orthodox, 107,300; the Syrian Orthodox, 44,970; and the Greek Catholic, 51,500. Other church groups, comprising Armenian, Syrian and Roman Catholics, Maronites, Nestorians (Assyrians), Chaldeans and Protestants, each numbered from 5,000 to 18,000. In addition, there were slightly over 31,000 Jews, mainly of Sephardic origin and with a long history of residence in Syria. With the exception of about 125,300 Armenians and 10,200 Assyrians, the members of the Christian minorities are largely Arabic-speaking and closely related to their Moslem compatriots. Most of the Armenians have come to Syria since 1894 as refugees from Turkish territory. The majority reside in the larger towns, particularly in Damascus and Aleppo, but considerable numbers have settled in the Al Jazira region. The Assyrians who fled to Syria from Iraq in 1933 and the Chaldeans

65:Landshut S-4 (no date)1950 M1 Middle East
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CHAPTER V

SYRIA

In Syria, where the idea of Arab independence found some of its earliest protagonists, nationalism has been marked by a special degree of ill-temper, perhaps because the masses of the larger towns—Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, etc.—at an early stage became an object of political manœuvring.

Anti-foreign feelings had been aroused as early as 1925, when clashes with the French Mandatory régime led to the bombardment of Damascus. After the Palestine Arab Revolt of 1936, Syria became a refuge for Palestinian Arab terrorists on the run. Fawzi Kaukji—an Albanian adventurer specialising in gun-running and gang warfare on behalf of Arab extremists—Amin al Husseini—the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem—and many other "wanted" disturbers of the peace found fertile soil for their activities in Syria.

Here the connection between Arab nationalism and Muslim fanaticism was particularly close, and even sermons in the Mosques frequently descended to the level of vicious and inflammatory diatribes against non-believers. As early as October, 1945, the leader of the "Young Muslims' Association," Sheikh Mustafa al-Sibaj, in a violent speech after the Friday midday prayers in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, threatened the Jews in Arab countries with disaster "if the Palestine problem is not solved in favour of the Arabs."

These characteristics of Arab nationalism in Syria have had their effect not only on the Jews but on the Christian minority also. Hence the attractiveness of neighbouring Lebanon, with its security of life for minorities, as a goal for Christian emigration. The same was true as regards the Jews of Syria, a steady stream of whom has been moving to Lebanon for the last 25 years. The early trickle has recently become so great in volume that, by now, it is believed that only a few remnants of the Jewish population are left in the two big towns of Aleppo and Damascus.

The last census—that of 1943—gave the number of Jews in Syria as 29,770 out of a total population of 2,860,411 (of whom 2,424,817 were Muslims). The majority of the Jews used to live in Aleppo and Damascus, with about 17,000 in Aleppo (compared with 35,000 in 1910) and 11,000 in Damascus. The remainder, rather isolated, dwelt mostly in the north-eastern province of Jezirah, where they had settled in 1924, along with Armenians, Kurds, and Assyrians from Turkey and Iraq.

Of the 29,000 Jews in Syria in 1943, about 15,000 had left the country by 1947. At that time, there still remained about 10,000-11,000 in Aleppo and about 2,500-3,000 in Damascus. Less than 1,000